Center for Modern Greek Studies
Greek American Oral History Project
Transcription

Tape:

Subject: Anthony Dintcho
Interviewer: Angela Karahalios
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Transcriber: Amanda Cookson
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I: Interviewer
A: Anthony

Counter: 000

I: May 7th, 2004. My name is Angela Karahalios, I am interviewing Dr. Anthony Dintcho for the Center of, for Modern Greek Studies, Greek American Oral History Project. Ok, Dr. Dintcho, what leads you to consider yourself to be a Greek, of Greek heritage.

A: My birth.

I: By birth. Umm you said that your umm grandparents immigrated to the United States. What umm were they the only ones that immigrated to the United States?

A: My father.

I: Your father came too. At what time did they umm come?

A: My grandfather on my mother's side his name is Antonis Stamatio {006} 1989, Istanbul, Turkey and my grandmother came in 1906, her name was Stella Narayas {007} and she came from Lindos, the island near the Dardanelles. And in 1921 my father came from Istanbul, Turkey, his name was Kostantinos {008} Dintcho.

I: Umm do, do you have any stories of how they may have lived Turk-, there during that time? Like what, how, how times were during that time that they maybe left or why they left?

A: Umm my dad left because uhh two of his oldest brothers were killed in a Turkish Army in the First World War and uhh he left in the middle of the war, he was I think 15

and went to Athens to be educated {013} and then shortly after the war he changed his name so he could get back into Turkey and uhh he went to work for his cousin who owned the {014} Shipping Company. My dad became a {015} officer for them for oh five or six years, then came to America.

I: Wow. What was the reason he came to America? What did he have family here or//

A: //Well there was nine brothers and sisters and uhh then a large family business which was uhh, they owned a shipping business in Turkey.

I: Mmhmm.

A: And uhh shipping and also a, a {019} business and an insurance company also. Uhh I think he was just wanderlust for him to get out, he and his other brothers, {020) they decided to leave and Olga had married a, a Russian Count and she came to, to California, she lives in Los Angeles and uhh I think the boys got the other boys got wanderlust, the older boys stayed because of the large company.

I: Uh huh.

A: They wanted to run the companies.

I: Wow that's neat. Umm how about your, you said your grandmother?

A: Yeah//

I: //she came in 1902.

A: 1806.

I: 18-oh//

A: //1906//

I: //Oh 1906.

A: Yeah.

I: Umm what was the reason that she left?

A: Oh yeah, well it was simple they uhh the, the parents wanted her inheritance and they should go to the country//

I: //Oh//

A: //very interesting. Oh yeah, uhh her godparents had left her 500 {025} on the salt mine on the island of Limnos and she was uhh I think, at that time, 12 or 13 and since it my grandmother inherited, not her father, uhh he wanted to get the property and the money. So he shipped my grandmother and her eleven year old brother to America to a cousin and gave them $100 in gold each and shipped them out of Limnos and he would up inheriting the property.

I: Wow.

A: How do you get rid of your daughter? That's how you did it.

I: I guess <laughing> So umm when she came here did she ever tell you about any struggles that she had//

A: //of course//

I: //made {030}.

A: She went to work in a cigarette factory, rolling cigarettes.

I: Wow//

A: //for, for the umm, let's see, what was the name of that company, the Europe <sighs> 'oχι now I can't remember now, the name is no. I, I'll try to remember it, they used to make Hammel {032} cigarettes. Grandma did that for four years til she was, sixte-, sixteen, and then she became a midwife for the American Red Ross, Cross, and delivered babies. Uhh she delivered babies in the {034} in New York. And over the four hundred she delivered, two became doctors, two, three doctors came out of those babies. So.

I: <mumbling>

A: Grandma's an amazing lady.

I: Yes, she is! Umm and your grandfather?

A: Papo? Papo came here, he was in 8, '98. He was a winemaker in Istanbul, Turkey and has technical school uhh training, of course, to become a winemaker. And he came to American and uhh I never knew why he came. I, I don't know why he became. I think it was the mass immigration of Greeks out of Asia Minor at the time. And he was here about a year and a half and he wanted to go to medical school and they wouldn't let him in because he was Greek.

I: Oh wow.

A: Yet he was fluent in five languages but uhh and, and fluent in English also but they wouldn't let him in because he was Greek, it was a prejudice against Greeks.

I: Right.

A: So, Grandpa went to work for the Horn, Horner Cafeterias {042}, became a manager because he could handle x amount of languages with people so he became manager at one of those stores. Later on became a general manager then he'd clerked enough money and went to Poughkeepsie, New York where he started his own umm. He and a Jewish partner umm Myron Schwartz uhh purchased a, a hotel, lobby shop, shoeshine store, a restaurant, and I don't remember what else. But it was in Poughkeepsie, New York, they, they took off {046} their purchase. And he had it what 1930 and then my grandmother decided that the girls were uhh ten and eleven years old, my grandmother, my mother and her sister and my grandma wanted a Greek church. Since there's no Greek Church in Poughkeepsie, they had to move. So they moved to {049} New Jersey. And Grandpa opened up, wound up opening five, six restaurants and had them until uhh he had his first heart attack in 1939 and sold 'em all.

I: Wow, yeah. My family is in the restaurant business too.

A: Oh.

I: <laughing>

A: <mumbling>

I: <laughing> Umm//

A: //That was my grandfather, Antonios, Antonios Tarmatiyou, that was his name.

I: Umm how did, how did your grandparents meet?

A: In New York//

I: //you said they met here right//

A: //yeah, New York City at a party. Grandma was only 17, I think or 18 at the time. I guess she was the big deal because she could deliver babies. And uhh Grandpa was uhh probably 15 years her senior and someone said to him, "You know that, that any of the girls that serve you today you're gonna have to marry one of 'em," as a joke. So my grandma served my, my, my grandfather his some {056} and café, whatever that was and uhh kinda liked her. They, they hit it off and about a year later they got married.

I: Wow.

A: <laughing>

I: And so then umm so they were living in New York, I guess?

A: Uhh yes at the time they lived in New York. Umm I have some documentation {060} about the, the section near {060} and you could read it uhh from a, yeah I guess it must have been written 20 years ago but I'll be back and let you borrow it.

I: That would be great. Umm and how many children did they have?

A: Two, they had Angeliki {063}, my mother's older sister and my mom, Katherine.

I: Oh so your mom was here.

A: Yes, well//

I: //So she was born here?

A: Yes, she was.

I: And your, your father?

A: My father was born in Istanbul, Turkey.

I: Ista- and he came here at what would you say?

A: I think 1921, '22 somewhere in there. I think '21, '20 something.

I: What was his name?

A: Konstantinos. Yeah, we called him Gus but was Konstantinos.

I: And how, and how did he decided to leave uhh Istanbul, Turkey?

A: Oh I just think he wouldn't, didn't have a chance in the company. All the older brothers had a shot at the company and I guess he and his//

I: //at the shipping company?

A: Yeah//

I: //Oh//

A: //but he and his younger brother, Theo-, uhh <mumbling> {069} I don't think I really, he was there but took off and came to New York to visit her, his, their sister and all the, at the time was living in New York with her husband. And uhh the boys were

getting in trouble chasing women and they have other money to spend. And uhh Aunt Olga after about a month of their nonsense told the guys they gotta leave. Yeah.

I: So they decided to come to America?

A: No, they were in New York City//

I: //Oh, ok//

A: //she said, "You gotta get out!"

I: <laughing>

A: She had a home in New York City, one in L.A. She said, "You guys, you know, you're gonna get met in trouble, I'm not, I'm going back to uhh Los Angeles and I don't want you guys using this house as a {075}."

I: <laughing>

A: So she threw them out! After about two months they were goofing off. You know, these guys had money in their pockets, they were rich, spoiled rich kids. So they chucked 'em out of the house, tell 'em go find some work, do something with your lives besides chase women.

I: Can your dad umm tell you//

A: //That was Theo Sotiri{078}//

I: Oh ok Sotiri{078}.

A: Theo Sotiri was my dad's younger brother.

I: Uh huh. Umm how about your father's, didn't, did he have any struggles growing up during that time?

A: No, he was a privileged character. I mean my father was not a <laughing> my father did not come from a poor Greek family. They became a wealthy Greek family, Greek and uhh Poland uhh Russian family and they had money. It was for brats, it's he's traveled all over the world in steamship companies, he was in {082}, he's been around the world a couple of times. He would talk about the countries he visited when they were children. Bombay, India, places of that nature. Port Arthur way up in, up by, up in Northern Manchuria, he was there twice. In fact, he was there I believe 1918 I think, that would be the first time.

I: Well it sounds like he was well-educated uhh//

A: //Yes, Dad spoke six different languages, he spoke English with a French accent.

I: When did he learn to speak all those?

A: Istanbul, he went to school. School, Turkish, Greek, French was good, Armentian was good.

I: Wow, amazing. So umm how did your father meet your mother?

A: Uhh you know that's probably a military secret, I don't know.

I: <laughing>

A: I think uhh my mom and dad, I don't know, my mother, my father is twenty years older than my mom and it was one of those typical fix 'em up Greek marriages.

I: Uh huh.

A: Which uhh did not go well. My mother did not wanna get married at the time she wanted to go on to college. My auntie, Aunt Angie, cuz she did the full four years of college, she's at Barnard. And my grandfather would not let her to go school, to college cuz he figured she was too old to be educated, no one would marry her.

I: Wow.

A: Which, that was the mindset of the men in those days. So he married off both the girls by matching <mumbling> unfortunately.

I: And they lived in New York at the time?

A: No, they lived in New Jersey.

I: New Jersey//

A: //Jersey City, where I was born.

I: So you were born there and you grew up there?

A: Not Jersey City though, we, I, at age uhh, there was there boys in the family. My oldest brother, my younger brother, Stanley, and my older brother, Demitrios, and he passed away, Demitrios passed away when he was eight and a half years old by an accident. And one parent blamed the other parent for that and it concluded in divorce. So my mother, I, and my younger brother moved to Paterson, New Jersey, where I grew up, went to school, and umm that was it. I went to coll-, high school, joined the Army, went to college, came back, went to medical school, came back, then went back to New Jersey. I hadn't been back the, 45 some odd years, 50 years, whatever it is now. I think I

went back three times, I don't, I have no particular reason to go back. There's nothin' there for me.

I: Umm did your, did your mother become a U.S. citizen?

A: My mother was born here.

I: Oh yes, so she was//

A: //she was born here.

I: What about your father?

A: Oh yeah, he became a citizen way back in 19-, I don't know, after the second World War.

I: Umm.

A: I guess that was a contract he {108} umm we still operate, my boys operate, not me. So we still operate.

I: That's great. And so you were, uhh you grew up in New Jersey, you said, right?

A: Yes.

I: And umm what college, what college did you go to? Or how was it growing up for you?

A: It was wonderful! I had a great mom, a great grandmother and Grandpa died in 1945, Antonios. And uhh my mom and grandmother raised us and did a great job. My brother's a Dentist who practices here in San Francisco and I practiced here for 32, 34 years .

I: Umm.

A: <mumbling>

I: You grew up speaking Greek in the house, right?

A: Speaking Greek in the house, correct. We went to Greek school, we had prior Greek lessons in the beginning and then uhh Kyria Pozzani {115} was a tyrant, I remember her well. And uhh then Grandma, we all spoke Greek in the house, which I, I speak as much as I can. I only have two Greek friends here in town and when we get together our conversations are in Greek//

I: //Uh huh//

A: //to keep our “Greekiness” up, up//

I: <laughing>

A: Otherwise we’ve been Americanized pretty well. My children don’t speak Greek at all.

I: Really? Umm how about growing up in New Jersey, was there a lot of Greek uhh?

A: Yeah there was//

I: <interrupting>

A: //we had a wonderful Greek community. We had uhh community of about 200 families, very warm, close knit families. Those days they helped each other because most of the people came out of Depression and poverty and they never forgotten their friendship. Unlike the modern Greeks, they don’t give a damn about anybody, as far as I’m concerned, they’ve grown apart, they have not grown together.

I: That’s true, very true.

A: And uhh I said in those days we, was phenomenal, absolute everybody, not rich or poor you were. That’s, that’s <mumbling> not how rich or poor they were, they stuck together but umm no more. That, that’s, that’s all gone. I learned with Grandpa I would go to restaurants and there’s a Greek that needed a job, he got a job and if he needed to be fed, he fed them and uhh when Grandpa died it was one of the biggest funerals for any individual town. The mayor would come and he’d come to say our grandpa ran one of the best restaurants in town. The mayor came with 200, 150, 000 people. Grandpa was well known.

I: Wow.

A: He was well liked and well known because of his uhh charity. I don’t see that anymore, I see “me” as of now, I don’t see “us” helping each other. I see “what’s in it for me?” And that’s kind of uhh, I kept my “Greekness” about when it comes to helping people. As far as the modern Greek are, you know, they’re not the same people I knew. But that’s normal, that, that, that happens, people acclamate to conditions.

I: Definitely, definitely. People change, times change and//

A: //yeah//

I: //{134} <laughing>

A: That's exactly it, what's in it for me, exactly.

I: Umm, umm where did you go to school?

A: Oh I, I went to first school P.S. #20 in Paterson, New Jersey. I graduated from there in 1952, 1952 to '56 I graduated from Paterson Seaside High School, which at the time was the highest, the third highest academic high school in the state. And within 20 years the school became one of the lowest academic high schools in the state. In fact there's a picture named there called {140} uhh which was made about the school, how it degraded, it was a tremendous motion picture.

I: Wow.

A: Yeah, so. And then I <coughing> started Rutgers in high school, Rutgers is State University of New Jersey while I was in high school. As a senior I was goin' to college at night. Umm upon high school graduation I, I entered the United States Army <coughing> for the first time and uhh I was fortunate to, to be the airborne basic tra-, training, training and then went to uhh the uhh Army Communication school and then was sent to Fort Devens, Massachusetts at the Army, at the uhh which was called in the Army {141} Agency, ASA. Finished up there and then uhh came back and went to college, finished college, graduated from the university and then started a, started my first career uhh as, went to four years of the California College of {150} Medicine which, which I did two year residency and became a foot and ankle surgeon. And upon completion I went to San Francisco State University and got a Master's degree in, in uhh Administration. Uhh then by 197-, hmm five or six, I went to Peninsula University, which was owned by Dr. James Leontis, another Greek, who graduated Law School in 1981. Uhh I practiced medicine, I practiced podiatric medicine for almost 30 some odd years. I went back to medical school and grad-, got a medical degree, <mumbling> England and then come back and I'd been active in the Army recently. Yeah and I went back to the National Guard as a training physician and I train troops in the field. I'm now 65 and I'm a commissioned officer and I train troops to get ready for Iraq and other places. I train them in uhh the field of medicine, extraction from my fields and first aid and also evasion when captured and uhh we do find some, now and then, we teach medical school too.

I: Wow. You've been a very busy man. <laughing>

A: Oh, I sleep as you.

I: Yeah <laughing>

A: I don't have any intentions of not sleeping. I've been, was recomissioning to E-64s, my just after my 64th birthday <coughing> I tried to volunteer for the active duty and I was too old. So I went to, to National Guard and I've been training troops ever since which I'm proud of.

I: Yes, you should be, that's amazing, amazing. So umm did you, while you were in school, did you have any struggles, struggles because you were Greek, did people//

A: //No, that didn't bother me//

I: //Uh//

A: //the only time it ever bothered me was uhh and that's interesting you asked that question. Uhh one of my professors at, at, in medical school asked if anyone here is Greek and I put my hand up and that was the biggest mistake cuz, "I hate Greeks, I intend to fail you." Well I didn't, he didn't fail because I had good grades. I don't know why he did that but uhh he had a problem I guess with somebody, I dunno, but he tried to pick on me, it didn't work. Struggles, yeah, well I didn't have a rich father to go through medical school, had to work. And I worked as a surgical scrub nurse in those days, got paid 75 cents an hour and that helped pay my tuition to get myself through school.

I: Wow.

A: And yes, I ate uhh tomato, uhh ketchup sandwiches and salad for many, many times because that's my, my budget was tight. And that was before these loans that you guys, kids get today//

I: //Oh yeah//

A: //we didn't have those loans. <coughing> So we had to work our way, nights. Those who were, I went to school where a lot of kids were fortunate, came from wealthy families and umm my dad never helped me so I did all of my own and went perserverence {180}.

I: And how about your mother?

A: Mom let us work hard, she had two, she was working two, three jobs, she used to work very, very dil-, she was a, she worked first of all as a fraud investigator for the State of New Jersey {183}. She's a retired state employee but at night she would always work as a manger in uhh hotels, {184} restaurants, and she used to manage uhh Frank Sinatra's uhh night club on weekends in New Jersey. So my mom must have had three jobs, so she worked hard.

I: Wow.

A: No, no, mama set the, set the pace for the family.

I: And your, also you just said your brother.

A: My brother, Stanley, the same thing.

I: And he went and he became a dentist//

A: //Dentist, Dentist School suddenly went to work, used to deliver pies during the summer and anything else you could do, work, work for uhh a company delivered pies. He worked at McDonalds <laughing> we, we did all those things, never questioned, we're not gonna get there, we knew we were gonna get there, it used to, it'll take us time to get there and we did it. Didn't have time to feel sorry, to do that for ourselves or anyone else. Everybody was working, see that's the interesting thing, everybody worked.

I: Right.

A: It wasn't all this free welfare systems you have now where everybody feels sorry for everybody. Hell, you didn't feel sorry for yourself, it's your problem, get off your ass and go to work!

I: Mmhmm.

A: We all did it.

I: Umm at what time did you come to California?

A: Well at the time I got married, 1964. I married a lovely lady from San Francisco who's now deceased but umm//

I: //I'm sorry to hear that//

A: //that's happens. We had three children, Demitrios, my oldest boy, Stephanie, the youngest lady, and uhh the youngest guy's 29 who's Antonios. And they're all, in fact, Stephanie and Antonios are both graduates of San Francisco State University. And Demitrios is a graduate of UC Santa Barbara.

I: Umm what, how did you meet your wife and was she, was she Greek?

A: No! My wife is uhh French and, and uhh, and Scotch. She was born here in San Francisco. My wife was a professional athlete, she uhh was an ice skater with {201}. I was in school and uhh I happened to stay in the same hotel I was staying in. When I going to school I had three roommates <coughing> and they're, she happens, I guess the show came to town and that's how I met her. Met her at dinner one night.

I: Umm//

A: //two years later I married her.

I: <laughing> Umm did, was there a problem between you because you were Greek and she was//

A: //Well it was, it was, it was for, you know, uhh my, my mother uhh felt, I think my mother and my grandmother felt it was a problem but I think they understood later on. It's America, get over it. Just get over it and they did, they, they did. My mom's 86 and she loves her grandchildren and her great-grandchildren because Demitrios has two babies, uhh Alithia and uhh Andreas, so.

I: Umm so do you speak any other languages besides Greek and English.

A: Yeah my, my Italian is passable, my French is terrible, my Turkish is terrible, my Russian's terrible. But they speak, my, my, I should say my, my time in the, in Russian's good at one time but no more. I haven't used it in years.

I: Right. And you learned Greek at home and Greek school, you said?

A: Yes.

I: Umm was Greek school part of a, the church?

A: After, yeah, after, of course, you know, after regular school Greek school. You know, three o'clock, went to the Greek church was a block away, stayed 'til five o'clock I'm going home, five thirty, get home by six o'clock.

I: Ohh.

A: Yes, Father Stephanopoulos.

I: <laughing>

A: I remember him well.

I: Oh. Describe your feelings of identity as an American.

A: Uhh that's an interesting question, my feelings, this is a great country. I'm glad I'm here. When I visited uhh Istanbul, Turkey in my, in my grandfather's {225} to see what they've done with them and uhh and this guy his island, you know, if I was born on Limnos I would be a sheepherder, or I was born in Istanbul they wouldn't become a doctor, it's impossible. Uhh you would have to a be a {227} to go to medical school there. Yeah, my first cousin Lydia who was born had to go to Greece to become a doctor. She's OB/GYN doctor in, in Athens. {229} My, my feelings, no, greatest country in the world. As far as Greece is screwed up, as far as Turkey <laughing> I'm so happy my grandparents left <laughing> I have no feelings toward Greece at all. They have done nothing for us. They did, they gave {233} the democratic processes and, and uhh and given {234} in the world but they haven't done crap in 2000 years, they get themselves in trouble. And they fight amongst themselves, look at, look at Greek Parliament. Go there, watch 'em, oh they swear at each other {236}. Call each other crooks and bandits, thieves, it's uhh, do you always hear them on tv?

I: Yeah <laughing>

A: They don't speak, they yell, they scream at each other. No, no {239}. It's not the same Greek, you know, people understand that the ancient Greek and modern Greek aren't the same person, physically or mentally. Ancient Greek was blonde, blue-eyed, six foot tall or taller, it was a high watermark of Mediterranean life, they were probably a complete, same people came from the Etruscans because they used the same alphabet in Italy, northern Italy. They're intelligent people. Look at the modern Greek, dark-haired, short, curly hair, obnoxious, you know, they argue and fight amongst the other people you really, you really like in Greece is northern Greece. Go to Thessalo-, Thessaloniki, those people have a {245} about them, they're educated, they speak a couple languages there and they have some kind of, they're mellow, but people from Athens and on down are just violent towards each other, there's no reason for it. It's a small country but you know, they're in self-destructive mode.

I: Do you think it's because they, they have like an American influence and they want to be more like//

A: //no//

I: //lie modernize and//

A: //no//

I: //that's why they think they'd be modernizing and//

A: //no they have a Communist, Socialist movement in Greece, no democratic process there. They're all Socialist, everybody, everybody wants to cut {250} no one wants to work. Have you ever been there?

I: Yeah.

A: Well that's all they talk about is their {251}, how they're gonna retire at 25 or 35. So you know, a very few Greeks are actually productive, the shipping owners are productive and, and that's about it because people want to go to work for the government and if you're one party you're in, if you're another party you're out, you lose your job. I mean this is craziness. I mean their politics is involved with their, with their indu-, industry. Once that occurs you, you can't survive and that's their problem and everyone has {256}. Big problems in Greece, I don't know what their problem is.

I: Well that's why we're here. <laughing> Desribe your feelings of identity in relation to Greece or to the Greek culture?

A: Well it's rather interesting, you know, I had a uhh wonderful grandmother and, and grandfather, relatives who spoke highly of Greece. They left a Greece that was gentrified. And when I went to Greece for the first time I was totally taken away by the taxi cab drivers and uhh profanity, five year old kids cursing your saint, saying go fornicate your saint in the street. I mean, I've only place that I've heard that.

I: Wow.

A: You know what I'm talking about//

I: //Yeah, I know exactly.

A: I mean the famous words Panagia {266} you know and I'm sayin' to myself, where did they get this from? Where did they get this, five year old kids says this in the street. Where did they get this from? Why don't people stop them? And then I realized this is not the place that Grandma spoke about or to speak Greek in Greece is rather interesting. Uhh they tell, they will tell everybody you're Canadian, they hate Americans. <laughing> Ok fine, you hate me, good. Then you'll leave my money, you'll leave my time, and I'm not interested in you either. And I went there just for the culture, very important {272} culturally left, their politics is, is a beyond belief and uhh they, they've actually uhh. I remember one time they, they asked a group of us professionals to go back and help Greece and I was ready to do it and then once I visited I said, hell they don't want you to help, they want to tell you how smart they are, how smarter they are than you are. For example, I'm there and my cousin Lydia and I are watching television and this Greek chest surgeon says to him uhh in Greece, you know, in Greek, "If Dr. DeBakey…" DeBakey is the world's most famous heart surgeon {280}, DeBakey is 95 years old and still does surgery, all the instruments used in heart surgery is called the DeBakey clamper, DeBakey this or DeBakey that. And here's this, this, this self-inflated jerk saying, "If Dr. DeBakey wants to learn how to do surgery, he should come to Greece and I'll show him how." And with this I nearly fell over the chair. And then the following day {284} a Greek jogger. So they did a, a mini thing ehh investigative thing on, he would put on his jogging clothes and two blocks from the hospital he was {286} his Rolls Royce and he would jog the two blocks from the hospital and tell everybody he'd just jogged five kilometers. The same bullshitter, you know? And I'm saying, "This is it, this is, I've had it. I'm not coming here, I'm not gonna help, go out there." These people need a, a, an evolution, a {289} revolution and an evolution of thought and uhh that's it, they're still, they're still tied between the Second World War, between their Civil War, between the Community Re-, <mumbling> Democratic process and now you have a Socialist Communist thing against a Democratic process, it's not working. And uhh it's not gonna stop by, unless someone slaps them in the face. And uhh I think it's terrible. It's like the EU gives them money, they steal it and I have tremendous fear about the, the Olympics that uhh it's gonna be bombed. I think that someone's going to do a disastrous thing because they've allowed so much illegal immigration to Greece//

I: //Right.

A: There's probably two million illegal aliens in Greece with a population, a Greek population nine and a half million. So that means if about 11 and a half million people are two million are they're illegal. Drugs, prostitution, rampant in Greece. Murders never occurred {300} border, they occur, bank robberies never occurred, they occur. Uhh in business, everything's going down. And it's, welcome to the uhh, to the 21st century for them. It's, the Greece has changed radically and the government is a laissez-faire government, anything goes. Anything goes! You wanna do drugs, fine. You wanna do, you wanna do {304} is prostitution, anything you wanna do, fine. How did the drugs get to Europe to Greece to the Bal-, Albania, into Germany. Yeah, you know, you wanted to know what Greece is about for me? Nothing, stay where you're at in San Francisco. Next question.

I: <laughing> Umm do you feel your Greek heritage distinguished you in some way in your social interaction with people of other backgrounds?

A: Sure, definitely. Definitely.

I: Do you remember a time or anything//

A: //No, no, no particular time I think I was just idealized as a young child, you know, what Greeks were about? Honesty, democratic process, uhh {314} with your fellow man. I think all these things are, were instilled in me as a young child and I treat people the same way today, no, nothing's changed. I, I take everybody one on one until they prove differently.

I: Uhh what values from your Greek background would you like to pass on?

A: I've already passed 'em on. My children are honest, hard-working people. And that's all I expect them to be good, good American citizens, and they're doing it. They pay their taxes, they work hard, they employ other people. You know, if a young man like my sons <laughing> so does my daughter, she has her own business, she has, he has three employees. Demitrios has four employees. I guess he has four now, as one employee's gonna go off to two to three next year, yeah. They do a great job, I'm proud of 'em.

I: Sounds like it, they're very successful.

A: They are.

I: Umm did you umm not teach your, your children Greek because you didn't want or did they not just happen to learn it because there was nobody around to speak it?

A: There was no one around to speak it and Stephanie learned French and uhh Demitrios and Antonios learned Spanish in school. And uhh I sent Demitrios to Greece

for six months and uhh he had a great time but didn't speak that much Greek cuz he was havin' too much fun.

I: <laughing> We all do.

A: Yeah. <laughing>

I: What values from your American heritage, heritage would you pass on?

A: I've already passed 'em on, I think, we understand good citizenship, very, very important, good citizenship, honesty, hardworking, that's the best that you can pass down to children. Don't drink, don't do drugs, stay out of trouble. They've done all that.

I: Good. Umm how did you umm become part of the AHEPA and what, and why?

A: Oh God {337}//

I: //Oh//

A: //When I was a young boy, we got, when I turned 20 I became in the AHEPA and I'm still in it, at my age.

I: What was the reason for you to//

A: //Basketball//

I: //do so? Oh. <laughing>

A: //Basketball and I knew of all, we went to school together. I mean, all the guys in the basketball team, we're all, we played high school basketball so we played uhh Sons of Herakles basketball. We won the state championship three, four years, three or four years in a row, I think.

I: Was this back when you lived in New//

A: //New Jersey, yeah//

I: //Oh ok. And so you continued when you came out here?

A: I did but I, you know, I, I'm not active out here, I just pay my dues. I know a lot of the people in the, in the AHEPA. I just pay my dues, I've got a visa, I mean I, I've gone, I go to third world countries and serve there too. I've been places like Costa Rica and uhh oh the Caribbean. I was in Vietnam two years ago uhh doing surgery so, I have no time for AHEPA. I have time for my counts as a surgeon is limited, I'm 65, maybe another 10 years I'm still a foot surgeon and after that I, maybe at 75 or 80 I'll be going to the AHEPA because I can't do surgery anymore. But until then I'm, my, my talents

are needed for the Army, my talents are need in third world country. So I go, I take off, I'm gone.

I: So you're always traveling?

A: I do my best, yeah. Well last, 18 months of can't but I travel through the Army. I go five, six different places to train. I go to Camp Parks, Fort {354}, Camp Roberts, Camp St. Louis Obispo and then I get Army hospital and, and uhh {356} but I'm gone 10, 15 days a month with the Army {357}. So I don't really have time for, AHEPA is the last thing on my mind.

I: Yeah.

A: Young American kids who need this, their lives saved is more important than the other stuff.

I: Are you a member of any other organizations, like American ones or?

A: Yeah, the, the uhh, the Association of Military Service in the United States and the Association of Former Intelligence Officers for the federal government.

I: Umm and you said you traveled to Greece numerous of times umm amount of times//

A: //Umm four times, I was gonna say//

I: //How did you feel when you went there, like did you feel that people were//

A: //Second, third time I was gone because I, the expectations of good people are off, it was finished.

I: Right.

A: I saw the hostile {367} in Athens and people, even you know, once you get to the islands, they're nice. You get away from that, all that political garbage. I was sitting in Limnos and a guy comes on T.V. and tells me that weather's changed in, in Greece because of the C.I.A.

I: <laughing>

A: It's like, who is this, Ripley's Believe It or Not? You know? <laughing>

I: <laughing>

A: Yeah just baffoon, or, just, and you have the idiots in the village believin' this crap. I'm sitting there with another Army officer, this was about that because we were, it

takes some time to go to Greece and the {374} flies over and uhh we're in, we're outside of Athens in a restaurant eating and this one Greek guy turns around from the village and say, he says "είσαι αμερικανός;" "Are you an American?" I said, "Yeah." He says, "You see that C-58 flying?" I says, "{378}" He says, "Oh we build them." And I said, "Oh, you do?" I said, oh, I started laughing, so the Colonel sees me laughin', I says "the joke isn't over yet, wait a minute." I said, "I gotta get the punch line." And he says, "Yeah, we build them in a secret cave in Salonica."

I: <laughing>

A: So I said, "Thank you very much for your information." So I turned to the Colonel, I said, "Yeah, he says, he says they build them in a {382} factory in uhh Salonica, Greece in a cave."

I: <laughing>

A: So we all had a good laugh. I mean this guy was, I mean, I mean totally arrogant, totally arrogant. I mean you hear that kind of bologna in the midst of nowhere you really the propoganda is uhh unabounding, beyond, yeah, that's when I said, "That's it, this is it. I don't need more bologna." I'm not, I'm not a, I'm not a, I'm not gonna protect a Greek who defends Greece. No, they can't even defend themselves. I mean they've created so many problems and you know, Cyprus was free, the Greek government stuck their nose in and now Cyprus is divided now for 30 some odd years. Why? Because someone's mentality, they're bigger and better than the Turks. Rev-, stupid, liberal fanat-, they're mining in Greece against 68 million Turks. Who do they think's gonna win a war? Your brother, yeah, yeah. This Greek, this false Greek bravado just drives me bananas. Ok and I think, if they would together with the Turks, there's so much oil in the Mediterranean, if they're both drill the oil, they'd both be very wealthy. No, one threatens the other, if you drill for oil I'll start a war//

I: //Right.

A: And that's the stupidity of it all. Ig-, ignorance. So, you asked the question, I'm sorry, let's go, next question.

I: It's ok <laughing> Umm so when you were there did you feel because you were Greek-American that you were disciminated against//

A: //No//

I: //or people treated you differently//

A: //Yeah, well you are, because you can't tell me you're from America. You tell 'em you're from Canada or Australia.

I: Did you actually tell people that?

A: Did I? No, my cousin did. He saved my ass because I, I mouthed it off once or twice in, in the restaurants. "Quiet, they're gonna spit in your food." So I'll throw it in their face! <laughing> It's a.

I: Umm//

A: //It's like, it's at the Palestinian group blames the Jews for everything the Arabs. The Greeks blame the Americans for everything. <laughing> I don't know why, I don't know how they, we got involved in their garbage but we're blamed for everything over there.

I: That's true.

A: So I mean and yeah, they tend to want help but they scream for it or military aid they scream for it. My thing is, cut it all off. Give that, give that money to the inner cities of America, we need it here. And help the Greeks and {413}. That's my puny, my own stuff. Stop this military aid {414}. No, give, there's plenty of people in this country that you don't have to help. But, anyway, I'm not in charge of the government. Next question!

I: What is your umm, what did your grandma describe Greece as when she came, when she would tell you stories and//

A: //Well she's, she was a girl, a young girl from an island in the unknown at the time she got, I don't think it was worth 30,000 people on her island.

I: In Limnos?

A: In Limnos. It was a very big island, it {420} the largest island in the Dardanelles. And, you know, she had the conical view, a very, you know, pleasant view. But she hadn't been back there from the time she was 12 years old. She went back again when she was 65 and then//

I: //Wow//

A: //and when she came home, the first thing she said, "Take me for a hamburger and a malted milk." I said, "Grandma, you don't eat malted, drink malted." She said, "I do today. I'm celebrating my return to America, to America." <laughing>

I: <laughing>

A: And then she started telling me how nasty things were, even in. Cuz while she was there she gave away four new homes to these four little Greek spinsters, girls who were in their '30s, uhh Greek gotta get married. And her sisters who were in the 80's

were angry at her because she gave away the houses left to them but to these sisters. At 80 years old what are you gonna do with a house? You already have your own?

I: Right.

A: That's was odd. Grandma was, after that, she said, "Ahh forget about them. I'm going back," <mumbling> She died in '94 and everyone thought just, this is my home now. I always wanted to go back and see my home, she said, "No, this is my home. America's my home."

I: But she had that feeling//

A: //Oh yeah, of course, she did have that feeling while you//

I: //Yeah//

A: //she had sisters there and her brother was here. Her other two sisters were there. She was, always had that feeling. <coughing> She should return, well she did, put an end to her dream.

I: <laughing> Well in the military can you describe one or more events in which you were involved that were important to you?

A: I will, that's tough to amount my Army security days cuz that's not, that's not open for public.

I: Ok.

A: I can tell you now, in my military days now//

I: //yeah, that's fine.

A: That umm I'm proud to serve and people are smarter than the ones that I dealt with when I went in the first time. It was 1957, you had young people who could not read or write in the service because it was an open draft. I find a lot of young kids now who are in the Guard who are much well educated than we were because the Army is very, very technical today. I find them umm a real dedicated American citizen. The {457} doesn't give a crap about the Army or the Navy or the Marine Corps. But these kids, something's been instilled in 'em so that I still have hope for America because of that, because they're getting personified, giving to America instead of taking. Everybody else is interesting in taking right down to people who are mostly millionaires who collect their Social Security every month, think they're still entitled to Social Security which I think, you know, if you've got $20 million running the Social Security, why don't you give it someone else that, again that's another thing.

I: Right.

A; But the I think the kids are great and I enjoy teaching. I enjoy sharing my experiences.

I: Umm when did you join the military in the first place?

A: Back when? Oh well years ago when I was 17. Simple in those again I had gone to college by the time you were 18, 19 years old they were drafted. You had no alternatives, you had to make up your mind, either win the circus or stop college. Well I didn't have enough money to start, go to scho-, go to college so//

I: //What, what time period was that?

A: 1957, '56//

I: //Ok so it was after//

A: //'56//

I: //the Vietnam//

A: //before.

I: Oh//

A: //1956//

I: //Oh yeah, yeah,

A: //'58.

I: So//

A: //So I did join//

I: //Did you go to Vietnam?

A: I went to Vietnam three years ago as a doctor.

I: Ohhh.

A: I spent the whole month there at the, at the {478} Orthopedic Hospital and did surgery on the, on uhh on children for a whole month.

I: Umm.

A: So in that time I was <coughing> {482} wars here in the Army hospital and it got interesting because my second husband was the Chief of Chest Surgery at the time. He was an Air Force assigned to {484} Army Hospital. Dean later on became a, one store general, nice guy. He's now retired and lives in Maryland.

I: Umm growing up you said you were Greek Orthodox, right?

A: Yes.

I: Umm do you think that has inspired you in any way, the religion or, how do you feel about the Greek Orthodox religion? Do you still practice it?

A: Uhh to my heart, yes, going to church no because I find too many phonies. Sorry to say that. Uhh, you know, I tell you what, in the true Greek Orthodox tradition, I'm not talkin' about the political one, people forget that the first 13 years of your life in the true Greek Orthodox tradition, you're supposed to be raised as a Jew. And at age 13 you're supposed to confirmed as Greek Orthodox.

I: Mmhmm.

A: The same that Christ did. That tradition fell by the wayside. I was brought up by that tradition.

I: Wow.

A: And so, as I tell people, Jesus Christ was a Jew, he wasn't a Greek, he wasn't an Irishman, he was a Jew. All the disciples were Jews, the Greek Orthodox religion is a Jewish sect, that's what we are.

I: Mmhmm.

A: And if you don't believe me, read the Qu'ran, because the Qu'ran says they hate the Jews and the religious sect called and *their* religious sect called "Christians." So we are a Jewish sect and we were that way for the first couple hundred years before I think it was the Council of Nice? They <mumbling> I think 3-, 326 that they decided that they were going to be a separate religion, not an offshoot of the Jewish religion. So yes, it is, it has allowed me to be very, very open and accommodating. Uhh {517} your, your, your grandparents are Jewish and you're Greek Orthodox and if you curse to any {519} you curse to your grandparents. And that's the way I was brought up, we were very respectful and I don't find that in other religions. I don't know the new modern church is doing but I really have very little to do with them because I find, as I said, I find uhh not keeping the faith as well as, keep the money.

I: I'm the same way//

A: //and I don't like, I don't like it. I don't like it at all. Don't like it at all.

I: Yeah, like my dad says uhh, “You can practice your religion in your home, you don’t need it in a church.”

A: That’s exactly it and that’s//

I: //Yeah//

A: //what my religion religion is in my house, it’s in my home, it’s in my heart and I treat people the way I wanna be treated and that’s to, that’s the greatest lesson that uhh Christ has taught me. And that’s about where I, I live my life, very peacefully, without anguish or criticizing anybody else//

END OF SIDE A {535}

SIDE B {000}

A: You have a few thousand more questions to ask?

I: No. Well umm so was the Greek church a big part of your life when you were younger?

A: Yes, when I was younger it was.

I: And, and you, you’re parents, your mom went and everything?

A: Oh my and my grandmother, very staunch members of the church. My grandmother did a {002} to the poor and she all the things that, all through Grandma would hand sew a cross on it with the sacraments and <coughing> cloths and so forth. Grandma was really good at that. Yeah, we were very involved. But don’t think that in those days we had poor people, poor Greek people//

I: //right//

A: //living in the, in the basement of the church.

I: Wow//

A: //we all supported them because if a, a father died and the wife couldn’t work we all got together to support him, people.

I: Yeah, I know//

A: //I don’t see that, I don’t see that in the Greek church today. If there was a poor, old Greek lady who didn’t have enough food, the food was there. The I would say, “Ok, Mrs. So and So I want you to go and pick up the bag of food.” And then she would pick

up the phone and the next day it would be Mrs. Nikopoulos's job and the following day Mrs. Pappas' job to do it and the little Greek lady was fed. I don't see that today. That's gone.

I: Even today uhh it's almost like umm people feel that, you know, ashamed if they have to go to the church to, you know, ask for something, you know//

A: //it's no <laughing> not that the church has got a ten million dollar basketball court but the kid, {011} but they can't tell 'em fifty dollars to give away to you and this is bologna so!

I: Yeah.

A: One thing <mumbling> yeah, I've already told you how I feel about that.

I: <laughing> Umm.

A: I did bring some pictures of the family though.

I: Ok//

A: //the Greeks.

I: Ok umm well, how do you feel about umm having English put in, into the church system. Today you know how they, you know how they talk about oh we're gonna make the service all in, in English//

A: //this is nothing//

I: //<mumbling>

A: //this is nothing new.

I: Well I know they've been talking about it for a long time//

A: //But, no, no, no, no, no it started 2,000 years ago. Hello everybody, {016} they talked a lot, in the lang-, the language of the vernacular. Where did the Greek church went? They taught in the language of the country, that's how you got Russian Orthodox, that's how you got Syrian Orthodox, that's how you got Armenian Orthodox. How do you think those {017} why is Orthodox? Because they went to that country and they spoke the language of the country. It's nothing new//

I: //Right.

A: Nothing new whatsoever. It's just that the Greeks who come from Greece wanted to hear in Greek, I mean that's what it comes down to.

I: Yeah, exactly.

A: Yeah, no it's nothing new, it's very old. Tell everybody that//

I: //<laughing>//

A: //Hey! Wake up! You know, they did it a long time ago.

I: <laughing>

A: The Serbian Orthodox, you know? Nothing new.

I: Well we can umm, I think, I think that should be it but you can umm//

A: //Oh you wanna go through some of the pictures?

I: Yes, I would love to!

A: Ohh! <laughing>

END OF SIDE B {022}

END OF INTERVIEW

Notes:
{006}: Grandfather's name on mother's side
{007}: Grandmother's name
{008}: Father's name
{014}: Name of shipping company in Istanbul
{020}: Brother of dad's name
{025}: Greek word
{032}: Cigarette brand
{042}: Cafeteria spelling
{049}: Where in New Jersey?
{052}: Grandpa's full name
{056}: Greek food
{078}: Greek name
{134}: Greek words
{140}: Name of the film
{141}: ASA acronym
{150}: California College of __ Medicine?
{225}: Greek word
{250}: Greek word
{264}: Greek word